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SUBJECT: G/TIP AMBASSADOR LAGON SHARES VIEWS WITH INDIAN  
MEDIA AT CONFERENCE ON TIP

11. (U) On 18 September, the National Media Coalition (NMC) held a conference in New Delhi on human trafficking entitled, &Tracking Change ) Fighting Injustice; Voices in Solidarity.<sup>8</sup> The opening panel included Ambassador Mark Lagon of G/TIP, Minister Renuka Chowdhury of Women and Child Development, Minister Vayalar Ravi of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA), Mahua Chaudhuri of the NMC, Archana Tamang of UNIFEM, and Gary Lewis from UNODC. Each panelist spoke briefly on the role of his/her organization in combating human trafficking and the steps that must be taken to eradicate the problem.

12. (U) The NMC was formed more than a year ago by a group of journalists and NGO leaders who came together to raise public awareness on the issue of human trafficking. In the last year, the NMC has been instrumental in placing high-profile news articles in national, regional and local periodicals, as well as in broadcast media.

13. (U) MWCD Minister Chowdhury was particularly eloquent in describing the individual human misery caused by trafficking, and the various gender inequalities that play a part in fostering it. Domestic violence and female feticide undermine the important role that women play in broader society and individual families. But solutions can be found, such as the availability of microfinance to provide an alternative to women who might otherwise fall prey to traffickers. Chowdhury also noted that men must be part of the solution, and praised NMC for its work to empower men to speak out against trafficking and violence against women. She noted that the government can make policies, but the media plays a crucial role in spreading information on those policies and raising public awareness. The media can also highlight failures in implementing laws and sensitize the public to the lesser status of women in India.

14. (U) MOIA Minister Ravi spoke briefly about immigration of Indian nationals to the Gulf States, and the abusive labor practices and forced prostitution that often awaits them. He noted that the GOI plans to establish hotlines and other support systems to provide assistance to Indian citizens in need there. UNIFEM's Tamang complimented the Coalition on the remarkable increase in journalists who are passionate about this issue and strive to increase coverage of TIP. After commenting that few crimes are more terrible than the sale of women and children for forced labor and sexual exploitation, UNODC's Lewis further emphasized that trafficking affects all countries, including the United States, although poor countries are hit the hardest as people there have fewer options and are often more susceptible to coercion and deception. UNODC, in partnership with local NGOs, is providing training and equipment for law enforcement officials in India (through a project funded by G/TIP), and Lewis made mention of the marked progress he has seen in just a short period of time.

15. (U) Ambassador Lagon praised the NMC for its efforts and

said that the one advantage the media has is the multiplier effect that gets more information to more people more quickly than any other means. He spoke of how two-thirds of trafficking victims are in sexual servitude, 80 percent of those are women, and 50 percent of those are minors. Noting that India is in a great position to be a leader in the fight against human trafficking, Lagon said he hopes that India takes on that leadership role. He noted that more needs to be done, particularly on bonded labor and law enforcement, but also remarked that he was impressed with the government's efforts to fight sex trafficking and child labor.

¶16. (U) In response to a question from the audience on what else India could do to address its human trafficking problem, Lagon mentioned three specific actions: a) expand the central authority at the national level to coordinate local law enforcement efforts across the country; b) begin to address the problem of bonded labor; and c) identify government officials complicit in human trafficking and take action against them. On the question of what to do about those trafficked into abusive marriages, Lagon answered that it was necessary to work together to bridge the gaps in law and to make sure marriage does not become the simple passage of a commodity. On the question of how the various organizations collect data on trafficking, both UNODC Lewis and Ambassador Lagon observed that available information is not precise, to a great extent due to the underground nature of the criminal activity, and the fact that victims often don't come forward.

However, Ambassador Lagon stated that the simple fact that a government tries to collect such information can be a good indicator of how serious it views the problem and how committed it is to combating it.

¶17. (U) G/TIP Ambassador Lagon was not able to clear this

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message before departing post.  
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